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House Unit Divided On Cuba and Zaire

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The Carter administration, continuing its campaign to convince Congress that Cuba assisted the rebel invasion of Zaire last month, drew sharply mixed reactions yesterday from the House International Relations Committee.

Following a closed meeting with Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner, committee members said they were still divided about whether the administration has sufficient evidence to prove President Carter's charge that Cuba helped train and equip the invasion force.

Essentially, it was a case of those who have tended to support the president saying they were convinced, while those who have expressed doubts said they had heard nothing to change their minds.

Several members complained that they had been hindered in making up their minds by the administration's refusal to show any of its evidence to the committee. Instead, they added, yesterday's presentation was limited to Turner's describing the intelligence on which Carter based his charges.

Some of the evidence — satellite photos and reports from African diplomats, captured rebels and agents of other governments — has been made available to the House and Senate intelligence committees.

But, in a move that administration sources privately say is intended to guard against leaks, the CIA has balked at providing this documentation to the House International Relations Committee or to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which are to meet with Turner today.

As a result, the reactions of those who heard Turner yesterday turned on their individual willingness to accept what he said at face value.

Committee Chairman Clement J. Zablocki (D-Wis.), normally a staunch administration loyalist, said, "I'm convinced the president's assessment was accurate, and I support the president. There's no doubt about the credibility of the evidence."

However, Rep. Don L. Bonker (D-Wash.), a committee member who has

specialized in African affairs, said: "I wasn't persuaded they have evidence that would stand up in a court of law. They haven't proved complicity."

Bonker said there was little doubt that the Cubans, in the past, have helped train Zaire rebels in Angola, the neighboring Marxist country from which the invasion was launched. But he added:

"There's a very fine line here. I don't see any evidence directly linking the Cubans to involvement in or direction of this specific operation."

Similarly mixed judgments and expressions of confusion came from other committee members who asked not to be identified. What was probably the dominant opinion was expressed by Rep. Helen S. Mayner (D-N.J.). She said she supported the president, but added: "I knew as much before this meeting as I do now."

While the arguments about the evidence continued, the first stirrings of congressional reaction began to be heard about Carter's Wednesday U.S. Naval Academy speech in which he challenged the Soviet Union to "choose either confrontation or cooperation."

At a breakfast meeting with reporters, Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), who next year is expected to become chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, criticized what he called "the Cold War 'The Russians are coming' tone" of the president's rhetoric.

Church said it was unrealistic for the United States, "which by nature of its position seeks to exert as much influence as it can in the world," to tell the Soviet Union that it cannot do the same.

The real issue in Zaire, Church argued, is the West's interest in keeping that country's copper mines open.

A similar caution came from Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.), who originated the request that the administration show Congress its evidence about Cuban involvement in Zaire.

"We don't need so much confrontation," McGovern said of Carter's speech. "I don't see any purpose in getting the American people into a kind of antiSoviet hysteria. I don't think that was his intention, but I think he needs to cool the rhetoric..."